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SIPDIS

INFO NSC WASHDC
AID WASHDC
ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

STATE FOR AF/W AND AF/RA
NSC FOR FRASER
AFR/SD/EDDI FOR DR. SARAH MOTEN
AFR/DAA FOR KEITH BROWN

E.O. 12958 : N/A

TAGS: EAID SCUL KDEM NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: INAUGURAL CEREMONY FOR EDDI
COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTER IN ABUJA

¶1. A highly successful inaugural ceremony for the first of six EDDI Community Resource Centers (CRC) was held on Tuesday, February 19, at the National Center for Women's Development in Abuja. Ambassador Jeter gave the opening address, in which he explained the genesis of the Community Resource Center Initiative and our hope for what it will mean for Nigeria's future information technology development, distance learning, and greater opportunities for the physically challenged. The Director General of the National Center for Women Development welcomed the gathering of over two hundred guests.

¶2. President Obasanjo's keynote address was delivered by the Minister of Science and Technology, Professor Turner Isoun. Professor Isoun noted the President's gratitude for this assistance to Nigeria and for the sizeable stake EDDI has devoted to Nigeria. He called the decision to name the center after Chief Justice Ige "highly thoughtful, visionary and commendable." The First Lady, Stella Obasanjo, who attended as the special guest of honor, welcomed the initiative. Dr. Sarah Moten, EDDI Coordinator, spoke about EDDI activities in Nigeria and said that this outreach represented our belief in being inclusive and engaging all segments of Nigerian society. Dr. Moten also noted that Nigeria is blessed with tremendous opportunities and that the U.S. is prepared to help ensure a strong, united and vibrant Nigeria.

¶3. Following the program, the officials present presided at a ribbon-cutting and commissioning ceremony at the entrance of the Community Resource Center. The Center is named the Chief Bola Ige Information Technology Center, in honor of the contributions to law, education and development of the late Minister for Justice, who was assassinated on December 23, 2001. The ribbon-cutters were the First Lady, Professor Isoun as the President's representative, Ambassador Jeter, Dr. Sarah Moten, and Ige's widow, Justice Atinuke Ige.

¶4. This group was then led on a special tour of the facility, which includes a specially equipped room for the physically challenged. In tribute to the First Lady's work on behalf of these disadvantaged persons, the room is being called "The Stella Obasanjo Enabling Technologies Room". The First Lady was visibly moved by the gesture and impressed by the fact that persons with disabilities, including one who was severely vision impaired, were actually using the equipment.

¶5. Other services demonstrated included independent computer learning, classroom computer instruction, Internet use, and video-conferencing. As part of the program, a special video conferencing session was arranged between the Minister of Education and Minister of Science and Technology and the President and academic leaders of North Carolina Central University.

¶6. The CRC opening received highly favorable media coverage. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) broadcast a 30-minute documentary on the

commissioning of the center on Wednesday, February 120. The station also carried a three-minute report of the event in each of the three segments of its news broadcasts. Minaj Broadcasting International (MBI) carried a two-minute report on the center, saying "The United States of America has taken the initiative in honoring Nigeria's former Justice Minister and Attorney General, the late Chief Bola Ige." Most of Nigeria's major dailies and radio stations also reported on the inauguration.

17. The Ambassador wrote to several members of Congress and Department officials informing them of the planned opening of the CRC. JC Watts of Oklahoma, John Lewis of Georgia and William Jefferson of Louisiana - sent letters of congratulations to the Embassy for the launch of the first CRC, and offered strong support for EDDI programs in Nigeria.

JETER